



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

ICE ARRESTS OWNERS OF COMPANY THAT PROVIDED ILLEGAL WORKERS TO SEVEN STATES

They are accused of bringing in workers from South Africa with fraudulently obtained work visas

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — A South African businessman was arrested here with his girlfriend and business partner Thursday following the unsealing of a total seven-count indictment for making false statements on federal forms.



Petrus J. Botes, 50, was allegedly involved in a scheme to bring in workers from South Africa on temporary work visas (H-2A) to work for employers other than those designated. Arrested with Botes was Joyce Yvonne Coetzee, 39, who was indicted on three counts of encouraging an illegal alien to reside in the U.S. Botes and Coetzee, both South African nationals, were indicted by a Topeka-based Grand Jury in the Federal District of Kansas.

The indictments and arrests follow an extensive investigation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Department of Labor's Office of the Inspector General.

Botes and Coetzee formed P.J. Services LLC in Bennington, Kan., in 2001 to act as an agent to employers interested in obtaining foreign workers through the Department of Labor's (DOL) Foreign Labor Certification program. P.J. Services provided workers for agricultural and trucking operations in a seven-state region, which included: Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, Texas, and North and South Dakota.

P.J. Services advertised in targeted agricultural U.S. publications. Employers who responded to the ads were allegedly informed that workers would be available within a week's notice. Then a petition was filed with DOL's Employment Training Administration to obtain H-2A Temporary Agricultural visas to bring South African workers to the U.S.

However, Botes and Coetzee are accused of filing these petitions for potential employers with or without their consent, and filing for more workers than employers actually needed. They're also accused of forging employers' signatures, and falsifying job descriptions and the nature of the businesses.

After receiving the visa approvals, Botes and Coetzee allegedly sent workers to employers that were not designated on the visa petitions. H2A employment visas do not allow workers to change employers without authorization.

"Both Botes and Coetzee are accused of blatantly abusing immigration and labor laws with their scheme," said Elissa Brown, special-agent-in-charge of the ICE Chicago office. "They allegedly operated their business with no regard for the workers, the employers, or the laws involved." Brown heads the ICE Office of Investigations encompassing a six-state area that includes: Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri and Wisconsin.

Botes and Coetzee were presented before U.S. Magistrate Judge K. Gary Sebelius in Topeka, Kan., June 2. Federal ICE and DOL agents also searched their residence in Bennington, Kan., the same day.

Both had also been convicted on visa charges in Kansas in 2002 and recently received final orders of deportation. Those orders will be reinstated following any trial that may take place. Should they be convicted on these charges, they would first serve the sentence that is imposed and then be deported.

Assistant U.S. Attorney James Brown, with the U.S. Attorney's Office in Topeka, Kan, is prosecuting the case.

This is an ongoing investigation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Department of Labor's Office of the Inspector General.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.